

VZCZCXRO3917

OO RUEHAG RUEHDA RUEHDF RUEHFL RUEHIK RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHLN RUEHLZ
RUEHROV RUEHSR RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHSL #0140/01 0521624
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 211624Z FEB 06
FM AMEMBASSY BRATISLAVA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9546
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0039
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 BRATISLAVA 000140

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

FOR IO A/S SILVERBERG AND IO/UNP EBROWN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UN](#) [UNSC](#) [LO](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR IO A/S SILVERBERG VISIT TO
BRATISLAVA

REF: BROWN-LYONS SIPRNET E-MAILS

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED -- PLEASE HANDLE ACCORDINGLY

SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION

1. (SBU) Welcome to Slovakia. The Embassy -- and moreover, the Slovaks -- are pleased to welcome you and IO/UNP DepDir Ed Brown to Bratislava March 3-7. Your visit will help us institutionalize the already strong cooperation we enjoy with Slovakia within the UN Security Council (UNSC), as well as in NATO and the EU. Slovakia has not been unwilling to part ways on certain issues with larger, older member states to enhance its relations with the U.S. and pursue its Transatlantic interests. Within the UNSC, Slovakia worked hard to prepare itself for the challenges of Council membership, deploying additional diplomats to New York and shoring up its presence in regions where it is admittedly underrepresented, such as Africa. While Slovakia considers itself "ready" for the two year seat, it is also mindful of the challenges it faces and is willing and ready to work with the United States here, in New York, and in Washington on issues where the U.S. has more experience. In this regard, your visit will have very real positive impact on U.S. - Slovak cooperation, as the Slovaks crave not only a strong relationship with the U.S., but U.S. mentoring as well. The confidence that Slovakia gains through such interactions serves as a "force multiplier" for U.S. transformational diplomacy goals, as Slovakia then feels encouraged to voice its positions -- which more times than not echo U.S. goals -- in international fora.

2. (SBU) Since 1998, Slovakia has gone from being what Madeleine Albright once termed "the black hole of Europe" to the "Tatra Tiger". NATO and EU membership were the focal points of the Slovak government and people and served as the engine of reform, and Slovakia engaged in a remarkable sprint (with U.S. and other donor support) to reach both those goals in the spring of 2004. Slovakia now feels proud, and indeed compelled, to share this democratization and reform experience abroad, particularly in areas where it feels it has a "niche capability:" Ukraine, Belarus, and the western Balkans. The GOS works hand in hand with Slovak NGOs to accomplish this goal, and Slovakia stands with the U.S. on the vanguard of freedom and democracy abroad. However, despite their good intentions, Slovakia remains more hesitant than we would prefer to speak up in most NATO and EU meetings; we hope you will take the opportunity to congratulate Slovakia on its international role and encourage them to speak more freely when "at the table" in Brussels and New York.

INTERNAL POLITICS

¶3. (SBU) Prime Minister Dzurinda heads what remains of a four-party coalition government that -- after the recent defection of one partner -- faces early elections June 17. It has long since lost its majority and relied upon the goodwill of independent deputies to continue its program. It had earlier lost the pro-market, culturally liberal ANO party parted ways with the coalition in August 2005, when its leader, Pavol Rusko, was removed as Minister of Economy following a financial scandal.

¶4. (SBU) All parties, including coalition members, are acutely aware of the fragility of Dzurinda's position so it will be important to recognize the contributions that all governing parties and members of parliament have made in implementing Slovakia's successful reform program. Opposition parties once critical of Dzurinda's close relationship with the U.S. tell us that, for the moment, they do not plan on bringing the strong Transatlantic relationship into the political fray, either positively or negatively.

FOREIGN POLICY

¶5. (SBU) Dzurinda (and most of Slovakia in general) is instinctively pro-American, and he has sealed his legacy as the Prime Minister who reintegrated Slovakia into European and transatlantic structures. NATO accession in March 2004 and EU accession in May 2004 were the result of the aggressive foreign policy and internal reform program during Dzurinda's first (1999-2002) and second (2002-2006) terms. In March 2004, Dzurinda hosted the "Bratislava II" conference to encourage other European and Eurasian countries on their

BRATISLAVA 00000140 002 OF 004

paths to modernization. President Bush's February 2005 visit to Bratislava solidified the sense of accomplishment for both the government and the people, and remains a point of pride for Slovakia.

¶6. (SBU) The Dzurinda government has been steadfast in its military commitments in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Balkans, and maintains peacekeepers in UN PKO's around the world. Slovakia's deployments to OIF, OEF, and KFOR underscore its commitment to the war on terror. Slovakia is contributing roughly 650 troops to military operations around the world -- a number that is high in relation to the population of the country -- and is now shifting away from (often reimbursable) UN peacekeeping operations towards NATO-, EU-, and U.S.-led operations.

¶7. (SBU) Slovakia often agrees with U.S. foreign policy objectives, but is rarely an outspoken actor in international institutions. With its term on the UNSC, as well as through its membership in both NATO and the EU, our challenge is encouraging the Slovaks to play a more active role in formulating policies in these organizations. The GOS sees its niche in policy toward the Balkans and its Eastern neighbors (Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova). It has been and can be very helpful both through formal government channels and through NGO activities helping to build civil society. Most recently, Slovak Political Director Ambassador Miroslav Lajcak was named EU "facilitator" to organize the Montenegrin referendum.

SLOVAKIA AT THE UNSC: THE STORY SO FAR

¶8. (SBU) Slovak priorities in the UNSC are, in many ways, similar to the U.S.: Slovakia is bullish on reform efforts, non-proliferation, and counterterrorism issues. The Dzurinda government's pro-U.S. stance extends to the Council chambers, where the GOS wanted to "hit the ground running" and continue the work begun by its predecessor in the Council, Romania.

In response to Embassy demarches and engagement, the GOS is engaged, inquisitive, and in many cases thirsty for additional information from Washington regarding issues and approaches to the Council agenda. Slovakia has expressed support for the expansion of the Security Council, and has backed Germany and Japan for permanent seats.

¶9. (SBU) Within its UN reform agenda, Slovakia has four main reform priorities: the establishment of the peacebuilding commission (PBC), the creation of the Human Rights Council (HRC), management reform, and ECOSOC reform.

¶10. (SBU) Slovakia has publicly and privately outlined its UNSC policy agenda as follows: regionally, its priorities are the Western Balkans (specifically Kosovo status), Cyprus, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East. Substantively, Slovakia focuses on counter-terrorism and non-proliferation, and desires to carry on the initiatives started by Romania regarding contacts between the UNSC and regional organizations as outlined in UNSC Resolution 1631. Slovakia has also outlined its "values" agenda, identifying respect for democratic principles, human rights, the rule of law, and good governance as its priority topics.

¶11. (SBU) In brief, Slovakia has been fully supportive of our reform agenda, feels the Peacebuilding Commission is "needed desperately," has committed itself politically and financially to the UN Democracy Fund, and continues to focus the attention of both governmental and non-governmental entities towards the democratic transition process.

¶12. (SBU) Slovak diplomats have told us in the past about the handicap they suffered during the country's split with the Czech Republic, as many seasoned Slovak diplomats chose to remain in Prague and continue their careers there. The GOS therefore sees UNSC membership as a chance to both raise their international profile and cement their position as a uniquely-suited exporter of democracy; any public congratulation of their efforts only encourages more action on their part. For the U.S., Slovakia's two year tenure on the UNSC is win-win.

¶13. (SBU) We have engaged the Slovaks on the general issue of applying international sanctions to change a government's behavior. The Slovaks are frustrated with those EU members opposed in principle to the application of sanctions. Slovakia is ready to impose "targeted" sanctions as a legitimate tool, and are willing to argue this point within EU councils. The Slovaks, however, do not support more

BRATISLAVA 00000140 003 OF 004

general sanctions (e.g., in the potential case of Iran or Syria).

ECONOMY AND INVESTMENT

¶14. (SBU) Slovakia has been called an investors' paradise and it is now poised to become a regional economic power, especially in the automotive industry. Reforms have made Slovakia an economic success story and captured the attention of policymakers and businesspeople around the world. Cumulative foreign direct investment has quintupled in the past five years and American companies are the third largest investors. U.S. Steel's Kosice operation is the largest economic force in Slovakia and the well-regarded company won the Department of State's 2003 Award for Corporate Excellence. The U.S. has a disproportionately large and positive presence in economically depressed eastern Slovakia. As the standard of living increases (Bratislava is above the EU average, though the rest of the country lags well behind), there will be a bigger market for U.S. trade as well. Our very strong economic ties will help balance EU influence and provide a sturdy framework for our overall relationship for many years to come.

¶15. (SBU) Corruption continues to be a problem throughout Slovakia, particularly in the health sector, and the broad immunity from conflict of interest and financial disclosure laws which MPs and judges enjoy continues to be criticized by watchdog groups. Nevertheless, economic growth and increased western investment have brought with them higher business standards. Parliament passed a law creating a special prosecutor's office and court system for corruption cases, and there have been several highly-publicized charges of past and current government officials on corruption charges. Both anecdotally and in measures such as the Transparency International index, the overall level of corruption appears to have diminished over the last several years.

PUBLIC OPINION

¶16. (SBU) Slovak citizens generally view the U.S. favorably; they remember American support for freedom in Central Europe, and many Slovaks have family ties to the U.S. Nonetheless, public opinion does not keep pace with the government on issues like Iraq, where only 21 percent of the population favored the deployment of Slovak troops. However, public opposition has not been strongly voiced, and there were no large-scale anti-Iraq war demonstrations. Support for NATO membership has recovered to 58% after a low two years ago of 35%. Compared to other Europeans, fewer Slovaks think their country should take an active part in world affairs. The GOS, on the other hand, is forward-leaning and prides itself on its overseas activities and capabilities.

VISAS

¶17. (SBU) The visa issue is one of the greatest irritants in terms of public opinion. Slovak citizens strongly believe they should be given visa-free travel to the United States because Slovakia has proven to be such a staunch U.S. ally, and because it is now a member of both NATO and the EU. In October 2004 the embassy and the GOS set up a bilateral working group on consular issues; it met both in February and June of 2005 and laid out actions for both the GOS and USG. We have already adopted many best practices recommendations from CA in order to streamline the visa application process. While GOS officials recognize they must temper expectations and acknowledge that Slovak behavior (overstays and fraud) contribute to the situation, they continue to press for Slovakia's eventual admission to the Visa Waiver Program.

ROMA AND OTHER MINORITIES

¶18. (SBU) Slovakia's transition to a diverse, multicultural society is not complete. The GOS has made efforts to improve the lives of its Roma population living in poverty, but progress has been slow and a comprehensive solution will likely require the EU to take a major role. Anti-Semitism and xenophobia still persist in certain elements of Slovak society, although repudiated by mainstream politicians. In President Bush's 2005 inaugural address he emphasized that a nation cannot export freedom if it tolerates racism at home, and it is a point that is as relevant in Slovakia as in the U.S.

BRATISLAVA 00000140 004 OF 004

EXPORT CONTROLS/ARMS SALES

¶19. (SBU) Under previous regimes, Slovakia was a supplier of arms and other goods to less-desirable regimes. Some of these old habits have not completely gone away. GOS export controls are now much stronger, and we are regularly consulted in advance of questionable sales. Still, interest persists in trade with Libya, Belarus, Iran, and other countries of concern. It would be useful to thank the GOS

for consulting with us and to reiterate our concerns about putting commerce ahead of security or human rights. Slovakia considers non-proliferation another one of its niche capabilities, and has sought out leadership opportunities on this issue in the UNSC.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR VISIT

120. (SBU) Slovakia is a willing and able partners for U.S. Transformational Diplomacy objectives, and a friendly face at the table in New York. Your visit -- during which you will meet with senior MFA leadership responsible for UN affairs, as well as local opinion leaders and media representatives -- will help improve the already strong working relationship between our two countries, as well as provide Slovakia with additional confidence to take a more vocal position in international fora. We look forward to your visit to Bratislava.
VALLEE